



CAVALCADE OF COUNTIES: IRON BACKBONE

The Mt. Hope mine, deepest vertical shaft in the East, goes down approximately 2,700 feet.

The Mines That Aided the Continental Army May Yet Bring Another Morris County Boom

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

IF some one were to write a musical suite for Morris County, the temptation would be strong to let variations on "Yankee Doodle" and the Minuet carry the theme—in tribute of the county's Revolutionary War importance and in recognition of two centuries of opulent living in the Morris Hills. It would make pleasant listening but it wouldn't be adequate.

Actually, to make the Morris Suite complete, music symbolizing patriotism and gentle living would have to be harmonized with the stridency of metal clashing against metal. The simple fact is that iron made Morris; all else grew around the iron backbone in the hills near Dover. Thus, in justice, the "Anvil Chorus" is as basic a Morris song as "Yankee Doodle."

MORRIS COUNTY'S base rests solidly on "Suckysunny," the "black stone" which Lenni Lenape braves showed white men soon after 1700. Until then, the course of settlement had been routine—Dutch colonists came over from Bergen in about 1695 to take up 1,500 acres near Pompton Plains; German and Dutch wanderers headed overland from Philadelphia to New York and stopped at Schooley's Mountain in 1707; New Englanders came over the mountains from Essex County to settle at Whippanong in 1710 and spread westward to "West Hanover" (now Morristown).

Hanover quickly became dominant because of the old forge built on the Whippany River about 1710. Soon after, a forge began operations in "the hollow" (Morristown) and within 20 years others followed—at Dover, where John Jackson lit his forge fire in 1722, and in Rockaway about 1730. Most of the iron works centered along the Rockaway River, where proximity to the ore was combined with dashing water power and thick forests—a highly significant factor, since a single forge "fire" alone burned 1,000 acres of woodland annually.

Most of the early iron men used ore from the mine opened in 1713 near Succasunna, where the "black stone" cropped out on the surface and required little digging. Horses plodded from mine to furnace, carrying ore in leather bags. Then, when the ore was

melted, the weary beasts plodded on to tidewater, hauling iron pigs shaped to their backs.

JACOB FORD SR., leader of all the early Morris iron men, led agitation to have Morris County cut away from Hunterdon, at a time when Morris had only two settlers per square mile. Hunterdon relinquished all of what is now Morris, Sussex and Warren counties in 1738 and 15 years later (1753) Sussex and Warren counties cut away from Morris. Actually, the Morris freedom was limited; until 1772 the county had no representatives in the State Legislature.

Morristown assumed both its name and designation as county seat in 1740. Elsewhere the early villages of Pompton, Whippany, German Valley, Chester, Dover, Rockaway and Mendham

expanded—but by 1750 Morristown ruled supreme as a commercial center. Iron workers trekked to Morristown once a week for supplies and much of the iron paper work was done there.

Morris County iron masters rebelled at the 1750 British decree that henceforth no rolling or slitting mills could operate in the colonies. Quietly the Morris mills kept operating in defiance of the decree—a full 20 years before violation of British laws became widespread.

An excellent premise might be established to the effect that the Morris hills gave birth to full-scale rebellion—except that the most noted of the surreptitious slitting mills, the one at Boone Town, was run by men who became Tories after the war started. This rebellion of the 1750 was more a

rebellion of the pocketbook than of principle.

JOHN JACOB FAESCH came on the Morris scene in 1772, when he bought several thousand acres at Mt. Hope after leaving the London Company at Ringwood. Faesch built a furnace, expanded his holdings near Mt. Hope to more than 10,000 acres and became the county's supreme ironmaster—more powerful even than the Fords, Jacob Sr. and Jacob Jr. His richness didn't extend to the spirit, however, since he believed religion was a "very good thing—to keep the lower classes in proper subordination."

Morris County attracted the landed gentry even before the Revolution. In addition to Faesch and the Fords (who in 1774 built the mansion Washington occupied in the Winter of 1779-80), great landholders included Peter Kemble, who became a Tory; Lucas von Beaverhoudt, who entertained impartially both British and American soldiers at "Beaverwyck" in Troy Hills, and Capt. Michael Kearny of His Britannic Majesty's Navy, whose Whippany estate became known as the "Irish Lot."

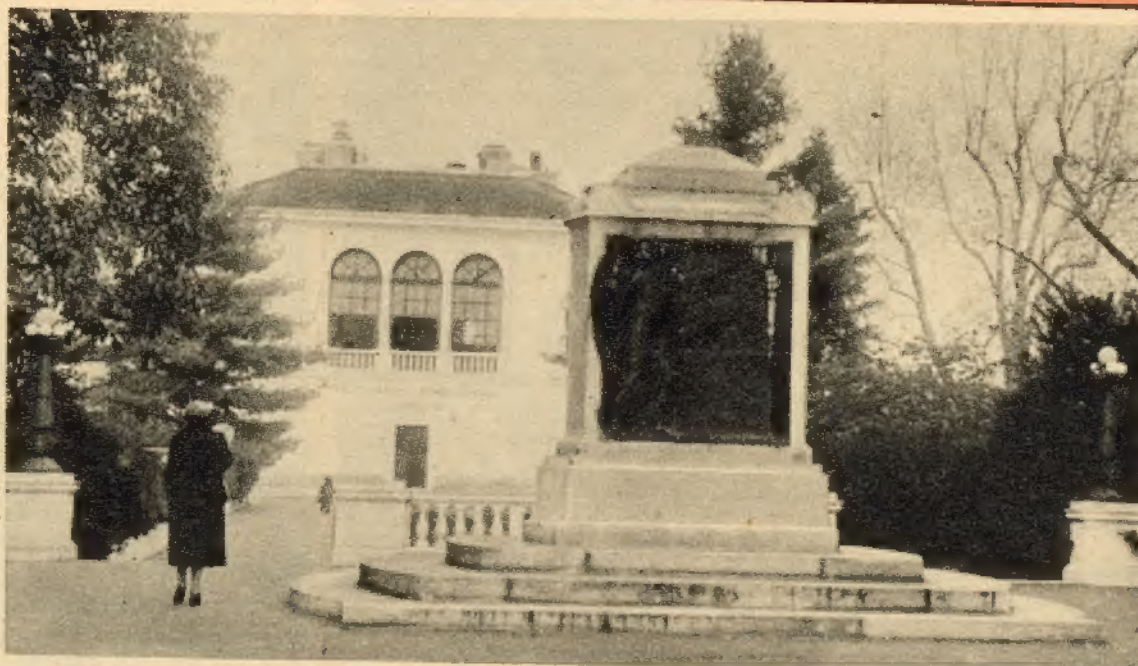
When war flared, Morris County had the iron backbone to stiffen rebellion. Gen. Washington led his bruised troops north to Morristown from Princeton early in January, 1777, and remained until Spring. He familiarized himself with the iron works (a Washington letter written in 1777 tells of between 80 and 100 iron works "great and small" in Morris County).

MUNITIONS poured from the forges and furnaces, particularly those at Hibernia and Mt. Hope. Shovels, axes, cannon, cannon balls, grapeshot and other supplies went to the Continental Army throughout the war. In return, employees were exempted from service. Col. Jacob Ford built a powder mill near Morristown in 1776, probably the only Revolutionary War powder mill in New Jersey.

All New Jersey mourned the death of both Fords in January, 1777. Jacob Jr. died January 11 of pneumonia and eight days later Jacob Sr. died of fever. Thus Morris County lost its

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This is the fourteenth of a series of articles dealing with New Jersey's 21 counties, sketching their past and present with, now and then, a peek into their future. The counties will be considered in alphabetical order each week. Next Sunday: Ocean County.



The Cenotaph, Morristown's memorial to its World War dead, and the Municipal Building, once the home of Theodore N. Vail, a former president of American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

MORRIS COUNTY



Scene along the South Branch of the Raritan River at Naughtright, one of Jersey's most picturesque rural areas.



The home of Tempe Wick, Colonia

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most important early leaders at a time when the American cause sorely needed both of them.

Washington spent his first Winter in Morristown in Jacob Arnold's Tavern while his men camped in the Loan-taka Valley. Surrounding hills made the village easy to defend and even then it must have been a handsome town, since the Green had been set aside as early as 1771. The ease of defense, the pleasantness of the village and the strength of the iron region lured Washington and his army back for the Winter of 1779-80.

THAT Winter truly tested the endurance of the American cause. The war had dragged on for almost 3½ years when Washington and his troops arrived in town on December 1, 1779.



Rolling country in the vicinity of Chester, en route to Mendham.



Totty greenhouse at Madison, the "Rose City."



heroine, who hid horse in bedroom to prevent seizure.

The Ford Mansion which is preserved as Washington's headquarters during 1779-1780.

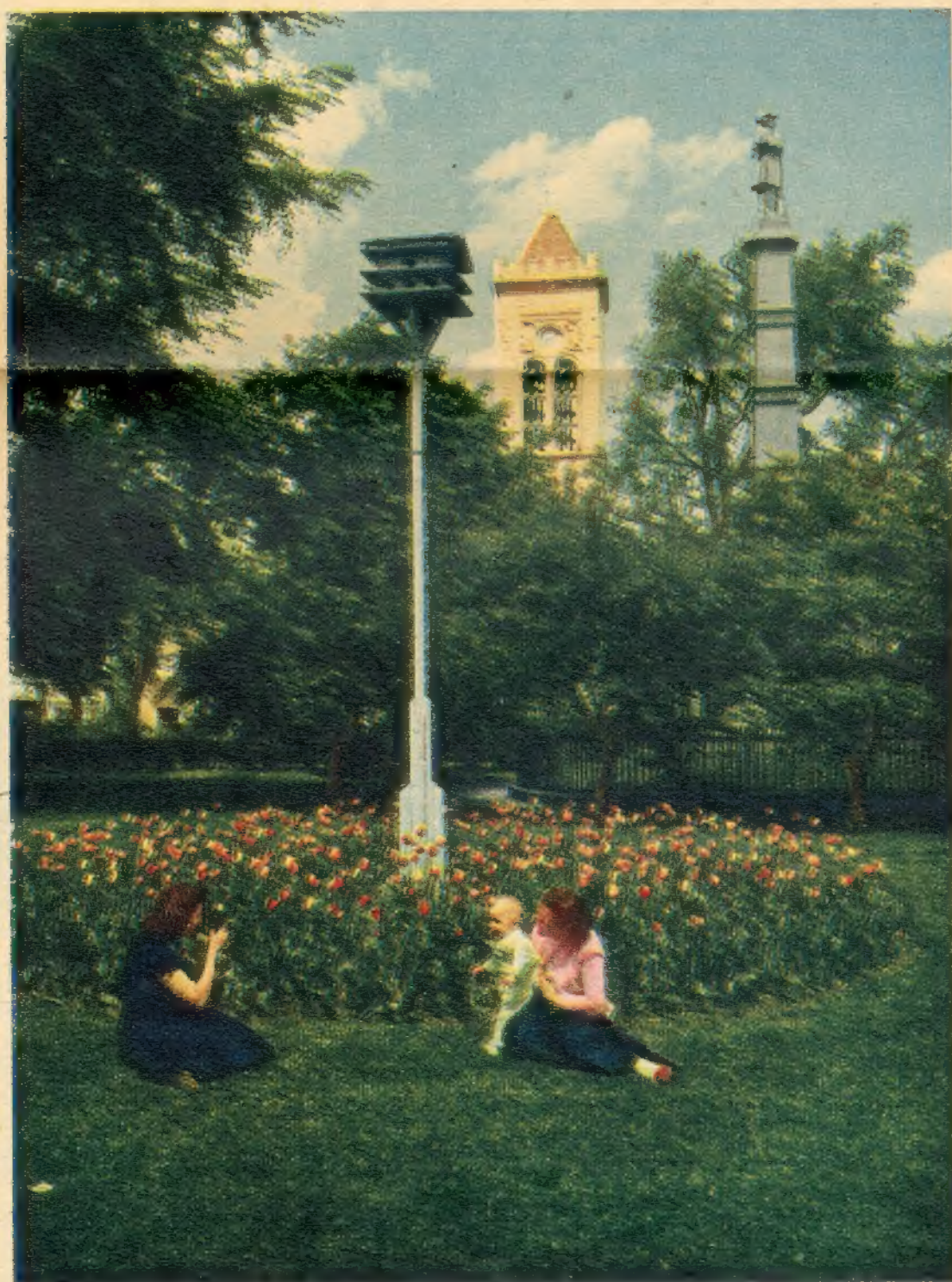
Washington established his headquarters in the Ford Mansion, his men went to live in Jockey Hollow. Everything added up to despair—poor food, meager pay, wretched quarters for the men. On top of everything else, Benedict Arnold faced a court-martial board in the Dickerson Tavern, Morristown, in December, 1779. Accused of favoring Tories in Philadelphia, Arnold received only a reprimand from Washington, but it stung him deeply enough to make him desert to the British a few weeks later.

Despite the generally low spirit, Washington and his staff had some high moments in Morristown. Count Pulaski helped maintain morale by his exhibitions of brilliant horsemanship. Lafayette, returning from a journey to France in May, 1780, reported that a powerful French force was on the way

with help. Young Col. Alexander Hamilton courted his Betty Schuyler, who lived just around the corner from Ford Mansion.

Hopes for an early peace soared high when the army moved out of Jockey Hollow in June, 1780. Thus the bitterness of two Pennsylvania brigades, back in Morristown the following Winter, can be understood. Many of the men had been in service more than three years; most hadn't been paid in a year. Their grumbling culminated in mutiny on New Year's Day, 1781, when they killed one of their officers, Capt. Adam Bettin, and marched off toward Philadelphia. Their commander, Gen. Mad Anthony Wayne, followed the mutineers to Princeton, where a series of meetings promised better things for the men.

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Morristown Green with Soldiers' Monument. Tower is that of Third Presbyterian Church.



Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey's largest, is famous as a resort area.

Color photos by Tuttle.



A country town, Hanover owed start to old forge built in 1710.

MORRIS COUNTY

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Satisfied, the troops returned to Morristown.

Out of the mutiny came one of the best-known Revolutionary stories—the story of Tempe Wick and her horse. The young Colonial miss fought off mutinous Pennsylvania brigade troops who tried to seize her horse. She galloped home and, according to legend, led her beloved horse into her bedroom to conceal him from the troops.

CHARTERING of turnpikes in the first decade of the 19th Century slowly increased the county's population. A toll pike from Elizabethtown to Morristown via Chatham and Bottle Hill (Madison) encouraged travel (but also prompted the more thrifty to travel via the parallel "Shunpike" a mile to the south). The Morristown-Phillipsburg Turnpike, chartered in 1806, made the Schooley's Mountain "health" business spurt wonderfully. Although the Alpha Hotel had been built on the mountain in 1795, the turnpike helped make Schooley's Mountain a nationally known health resort.

The "most gay and fashionable company" harkened up Schooley's slopes, to the Heath House and later to the Dorincourt Hotel. They came for their health, of course (those were the days when only the ill could stay away from work, but only the wealthy could afford the excuse). Their illnesses vanished after drinking from the miraculous springs, the waters of which contained many minerals and health-giving elements (not the least of which was sodium bicarbonate).

Meanwhile, iron makers burned timber furiously along the Rockaway River. Most forges and furnaces continued to depend on the old Succasunna mine (renamed Dickerson Mine after the family of Governor Mahlon Dickerson bought the property in the 1780s). From 1826 to 1830, 100 forge fires in an area from Hamburg to High Bridge used Dickerson Mine ore. Some

other pits—notably Mt. Hope—supplied ore, but the easiest digging was at Dickerson Mine.

HIGH costs of transportation and diminishing forest land seemed certain to doom the Morris County iron industry, until George P. Macculloch went fishing on Lake Hopatcong one Summer day in 1822. Gazing over the lake, Macculloch noted the mountains sloping away to the east and his mind played with the thought of a canal, utilizing the waters of Lake Hopatcong and flowing to tidewater down the Rockaway and Passaic River valleys. He looked westward, conceived the possibility of sending the canal down the Musconetcong River valley to Phillipsburg—and the approach to Pennsylvania anthracite.

Macculloch definitely had Morris County iron in mind when he sought financing for his plan. His scheme seemed fantastic; financial backing came slowly, but in August, 1831, the canal linked Easton and Newark—every inch of it dug by hand. Never before had such an engineering feat been accomplished; boats literally climbed mountains by an ingenious system of planes and locks. Anthracite flowed into Morris County. Iron again became a powerful king.

Dover, Boonton and Rockaway all found new life. Henry McFarlan and Joseph Blackwell, New York merchants, expanded the old iron works. In 1827 they laid out streets and offered lots for sale (with the canal-to-be their chief selling point). Smoke belled forth in thick columns from the village's two rolling mills, its foundries, its nail and spike factory, its forging shop and numerous smaller iron-connected enterprises.

BOONTON had the most impressive boom of all, however. Grass grew in Boonton's streets before the canal cut through, then the New Jersey Iron Co. built a new mill in the village in 1830. The company brought in skilled roll-



Rose Memorial Library viewed through Drew University gateway.

ing mill mechanics from England and started to roll. Paradoxically, as soon as the mill started to benefit from the canal its rollers began to turn out axles, wheels and rails for railroads—thus helping doom the canal before it was fairly started.

One of the most famous iron manufacturers of all was the Speedwell Iron Works in Morristown. Its early achievements included the manufacture in 1819 of the driving shaft for the SS Savannah, first vessel to cross the Atlantic using steam. Samuel F. B. Morse and Alfred Vail brought the old mill its greatest fame, however, by their development of the electromagnetic telegraph—with the financial encouragement of Judge Stephen Vail, Alfred's father and owner of the iron works. Three miles of wire

looped around the old mill carried the first telegraph message on January 6, 1838, when Vail ticked out: "A patient waiter is no loser."

Iron entered a new era after 1850. Until then, products of Morris mines had largely been processed within the county. After 1850, most of the ore went out of the county for processing, with the change traceable to the coming of the Morris & Essex Railroad to Dover in 1848—10 years after it reached Morristown.

Quick transportation encouraged extensive mining and exportation of ore. In 1855 Morris County mines produced 100,000 tons of ore; 12 years later that total jumped to 275,000 tons and by 1880 Morris County was the third county in the nation in amount of iron ore mined, with 568,420 tons.



Hilltop view of Dover, center of the North Jersey iron industry.



Morris County's 480 square miles were once part of Hunterdon.

IRON mines pockmarked the entire backbone of Western and Northern Morris County. As many as 50 mines operated at once in the region from Long Valley to Hibernia. Then the iron industry discovered in 1882 that iron ore could almost literally be picked off the surface in the Mesabi region near Lake Superior. The crown moved from Morris to Mesabi.

The Jersey iron dynasty faced ruin, although full effects of the Mesabi interloper took 40 years to upset Morris iron men. Nevertheless, the ancient Dickerson mine closed in the 1890s after extracting more than 1,000,000 tons of ore. Hurdstown's famous mine closed in 1898, after going down 2,600 feet for elusive iron. Hibernia, once the heart of the industry,

heard the sound of the pick for the last time in 1913—seven years after 13 miners drowned in flooded shafts.

The iron mines naturally attracted allied industries. Dover had an extensive plant in the 1870s for making mine equipment, in addition to its rolling mills. Boonton's iron processors gained additional fame for nail production, while Wharton attracted the tremendous foundry of the Replogle Steel Co. (whose closing in 1919, incidentally, brought economic collapse to Wharton).

Mines enticed the Giant Powder Co. of California to Kenil in 1871 to make dynamite. First devoted exclusively to dynamite, Giant turned to smokeless powder and during World War I (as Hercules Powder Co.) added TNT.

Hercules strengthened Morris County's long-established role as an arsenal of freedom, and the title became fixed in September, 1880, when the War Department purchased 1,866 acres east of Green Pond Mountain to build mighty Picatinny Arsenal (which now spreads over 5,125 acres of ground with installations valued at \$100,000,000).

MEANWHILE, the Morris & Essex Railroad changed the county's character by convincing men of wealth that they could work in New York and live in the healthful Morris Hills. Morristown's handsome streets became adorned with great homes, and splendid estates on the surrounding slopes harbored the wealthy and the famous. Writers and artists lived near Morristown in the last decades of the 19th Century—including Frank B. Stockton, Bret Harte, Rudyard Kipling, A. B. Frost, Thomas Nast and many others.

At the 20th Century's dawn, Morristown could boast (probably with some truth) that within a radius of one mile of the Green more millionaires lived than in any other equal area in the world. The fabulous estates were numerous enough to fill the pages of a World War I vintage picture book, "Beautiful Homes of Morris County." Possibly the most opulent Morris dweller of all was Otto H. Kahn, whose "Cedar Court" on Normandie Heights was so lavish that a 1905 fire which destroyed only the east wing caused damage estimated at \$750,000!

Interestingly enough, when the Morris County Court House was built in 1827, a weathervane in the shape of a golden plow topped the structure. While rural dwellers could quip that the plow "showed politicians which way the wind was blowing," the Morris farmer didn't come into his own until after the Civil War. Today the county's 1,000 farms have an annual business of more than \$7,000,000—\$1,500,000 of which comes from the horticultural business centered in Madison, the "Rose City" where rose growing has been big business since the 1880s.

IRON still has great significance for Morris County, since more than 500,000 tons of ore are extracted annually from Mt. Hope, Scrub Oak and Richards mines (most active iron mines in New Jersey). Ever present is the possibility of greater glory, since an estimated 600,000,000 tons of ore still give substance to the hills. If ever Mesabi slips, Morris should see a return of the king with the iron crown.

However, the iron hills today play host to a growing recreation business. Indeed, the region is now better known as the "Lakeland," mainly because of Lake Hopatcong. Largest of New Jersey's lakes, Hopatcong has been popular for more than 60 years. Numerous smaller lakes dot all of North Morris, most of them close to former thriving iron ore villages.

Much of Morris continues to be rural, particularly north and west of Dover. Another vast stretch of ground—the prehistoric "Great Swamp" between Chatham and Basking Ridge—has resisted efforts to turn it to usefulness. However, Morris is becoming an area of small home owners, with many developments spreading over former great estates. Other large land holdings now are being used as building sites for modern industrial plants. Not that great estates are completely a thing of the past in Morris, but many of the "old" names have moved elsewhere since World War I.

MORRIS COUNTY obviously (and correctly) takes tremendous pride in its Colonial heritage. Morristown National Park, established in 1933, has attracted more than 4,000,000 visitors in its 19 years of existence. The Morristown Green, while of some nuisance in the automobile age, makes Morristown unique among all New Jersey towns.

Thus has Morris moved away from the iron monarchy, yet has seen nearly every movement directed or affected by iron. Iron isn't king in 1952; yet, sitting on a throne of 600,000,000 tons of iron ore, King Ferro may return any day—and to glory greater than ever before known.